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## THE VICTORIAN ABORIGINES: THEIR INITIATION CEREMONIES AND DIVISIONAL SYSTEMS

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Although several articles have been written on the aborigines of Victoria, there still appears to be room for a short treatise defining the approximate boundaries of the different nations, if they may be so termed, into which the colony was originally divided. This work should have been done half a century ago, while the natives were yet sufficiently numerous to supply the necessary information, but I think it is still possible to do something in this direction.

The only way at the present time to accomplish what I have indicated is to study the languages or dialects of the population, grouping together those which have an evident affinity; to determine the geographic range of tribes having the same divisional names, such as Krokitch and Kamatch, for example, and to endeavor to ascertain the character of the initiation ceremonies common to certain communities. I have before stated that when several tribes are bound together by affinity of speech, have the same divisional (or class) names, and similar initiation ceremonies, they form communities, and aggregates of these communities may be designated nations.<sup>1</sup>

Acting upon the lines thus laid down, I shall make the attempt in the following pages to define the boundaries of the nations into which the aboriginal inhabitants of Victoria were

<sup>1</sup> "The Kamilaroi Class System of the Australian Aborigines," *Proc. Roy. Geog. Soc. Aust. (Q.)*, vol. x, pp. 18-34. The reader is invited to peruse this article, which gives an outline of the organization of all the principal tribes in New South Wales and Queensland.

divided, giving the names of the divisional systems and inaugural rites so far as they can now be ascertained. A map of Victoria is appended for the purpose of supplementing and explaining more fully the descriptions given in the letter-press. Portions of the adjoining colonies of South Australia and New South Wales are included in this map, because the native boundaries were not coincident with those of the colonies mentioned.

#### I—THE BANGARANG NATION

The tribes comprising this nation occupied a tract of country in central Victoria which may be approximately defined as being bounded on the north by a line some miles beyond the river Murray, and on the south by the seacoast from Port Phillip to the Tarwin river. Their western limits may be stated as consisting of a line from Geelong northerly through Castlemaine to the Murray, and on the east they were bounded by a line from the mouth of the Tarwin river to Jericho and onward to Mount Tambo, or "Three Brothers," in the main range dividing the tributaries of the Murray river from the streams flowing southerly toward the seacoast. From Mount Tambo they were restricted to the western slope of the Benambra mountains and their northerly continuation to the Murray river. On the north they adjoined and were overlapped by the advance guard of the Wiradjuri nation along the valley of the Murray. The eastern and western boundaries have been adopted from Mr Curr's valuable map, with certain modifications; the northern boundary has been determined from my own inquiries.

The Bangarang were divided into two intermarrying groups, called Boonjil and Wah, and probably had aggregates of totems attached to each, like their neighbors on the north and west, but unfortunately the tribes had been almost wiped out before any one took the trouble to inquire into their organization. In 1888, when Mr A. W. Howitt made some investigations in this direction, he reports that the totems had become extinct, with the single exception of the brown hawk. In one place he says this animal was the totem of Wah, and in another that it belonged to Boonjil.<sup>1</sup> Their marriage laws were that a Boonjil man married a Wah woman, and *vice versa*, and, according to

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<sup>1</sup> *Journ. Anthropol. Inst. London*, vol. xviii, pp. 47, 65.

the writer last quoted, the children took the name of their father's division.<sup>1</sup> I am, however, of the contrary opinion, and think that descent was counted through the mother, being led to this conclusion by the similarity of their language and initiatory rites to those of the Wiradjuri nation, who adjoined and intermingled with them on the north.

Black fellows belonging to the Wiradjuri community whom I have met in different parts of the Murray valley have stated that Wah was the equivalent of Murri-Kubbi, and Boonjil corresponded to Ippai-Kumbo. In a personal interview with my friend, Mr A. L. P. Cameron, of Murrumbong station, he informed me that about twelve years ago he visited some of the south-western districts of Victoria, where he met old black fellows, who told him that Wah was the equivalent of Kumite, and Boonjil of Kroké. It may be as well to explain that when a certain group in one tribe holds the same place in the system as a group bearing a different name in another tribe, such groups are said to correspond to each other, or, in other words, to be equivalent, as in the above examples.

From information obtained by me from natives at different places in the valley of the Murray, I am satisfied that initiation ceremonies similar in type to those of the Wiradjuri tribes obtained along the Victorian frontier for some distance south of the river last mentioned. This tract of country would commence about the Mitta Mitta and reach westerly beyond the Campaspe. In confirmation of my conclusions I find that Mr R. B. Smyth gives a short outline of the Narramang initiation ceremony, "a custom of the blacks of the Murray, Ovens, and Goulburn rivers."<sup>2</sup> I have elsewhere shown that the Burbung of the Wiradjuri people is also known among them as Narramang. The account of the ceremony given by Mr Smyth's informant is briefly as follows: On the lads attaining the age of puberty a ring was formed on the ground. Part of the operations consisted of knocking out two<sup>3</sup> of the upper incisor teeth with a wooden punch. The youths were kept away with the men for about a

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> *Aborigines of Victoria* (1878), vol. i, p. 62.

<sup>3</sup> Mr W. E. Stanbridge says that in some tribes one upper tooth was knocked out, and in others both the central incisors were extracted.—*Trans. Ethnol. Soc. London*, vol. 1, p. 28. Mr W. von Blandowski says that in the upper Goulburn River tribe two teeth of the upper jaw were taken out.—"Personal Observations of Victoria," p. 23.

month, and were taken to a place covered round with boughs, where the women came carrying lighted firebrands in their hands.

Mr John Green, formerly superintendent at the Coranderk aboriginal station, on the upper Yarra, informed Mr Smyth that when a boy was about thirteen years of age he was taken away by the old men a considerable distance from the camp, where they made a *mi-mi* and remained for about a month, during which time the boy was instructed in all the legends of the tribes. At the end of that time he was held by some of the men until two others knocked out one of his front teeth. This was done by first loosening the flesh from round the tooth with a piece of sharp bone, and then a man knocked it out with a piece of wood used as a punch. His nakedness was then covered with strips of opossum skins, and on his return to the camp he was known as Wang-goon. When he was about eighteen years old the youth was again taken some distance from the camp by the old men, and when he came back he was called Geebowak.<sup>1</sup>

Mr W. Thomas, protector of the aborigines in Victoria, told Mr Smyth that he had seen an instrument called Perboregan (a bullroarer), formed of a thin piece of bark or wood, resembling a fish in shape, ornamented with such lines as are carved on shields and other weapons.<sup>2</sup>

From the lower Goulburn and Ovens rivers to the Yarra does not exceed a hundred miles, while part of the upper Goulburn is not more than a third of that distance from the Yarra. It is therefore likely that the Yarra and Murray River people would attend each other's initiation ceremonies, and, although there would perhaps be differences of detail, most of their leading features would be similar. The few fragmentary particulars supplied by Mr Green and the other informants to Mr Smyth closely resemble portions of my descriptions of the Burbung or Narramang of the Wiradjuri tribes on the Murrumbidgee river. Mr E. M. Curr states that in the Yarra River tribe human excrement was eaten,<sup>3</sup> another prominent custom of the Wiradjuri people at their inaugural rites.

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<sup>1</sup> Aborigines of Victoria, vol. 1, pp. 64, 65.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 176, 177. See plate vi, illustrating my paper on "Bullroarers used by the Australian Aborigines," *Journ. Anthropol. Inst.*, vol. xxvii, pp. 52-60. Bullroarers of the type referred to by Mr Smyth are described in my paper, which the reader is invited to peruse.

<sup>3</sup> The Australian Race, vol. 1, p. 73.

On the authority of Mr W. Thomas, already referred to, Mr Smyth gives the following account of the Tib-but ceremony, which he states was practiced only by the coast tribes. When a boy attained the age of fourteen or fifteen years he was led by the elders to a suitable place, safe from intrusion, where his hair—all but a narrow strip, about a quarter of an inch in breadth, extending from the nape of the neck to the forehead—was cut off with sharp chips of quartzite, and the head made quite smooth by such kinds of shaving as could be done by the sharp stones referred to. The head was then daubed with clay, leaving the narrow ridge of hair rising in the middle. He was then invested with a garment consisting of opossum skin, strings made of opossum fir, and the like, which served to cover his middle only. His body was daubed with clay, charcoal powder, and filth of every kind. He carried a basket under his arm containing moist clay, charcoal powder, and filth. In this state he wandered through the encampment, calling out in a loud voice Tib-but! He gathered filth as he went and placed it in the basket. No one spoke to him, and when he saw any one come out of a miam (hut) he cast filth at him. The warning voice, Tib-but! must, however, be constantly heard, or the rite would be incomplete, and the proprieties would be infringed. After the lapse of some days, when the boy's hair began to show through the covering of clay, or at least to have grown a little, the period of probation being regulated by the elders, he was given over to the women, who washed him and painted his face with black lines made with a pigment of powdered charcoal mixed with *weerup*, and danced before him.<sup>1</sup>

Mr A. W. Howitt in 1885 gives practically the same account of this ceremony,<sup>2</sup> which he calls Jibauk, evidently the same word which Mr Smyth spells Geebowak. This was apparently a name given to any initiated person. Mr Howitt mentions another ceremony, called Talungun, among the Western Port blacks, which consisted simply of clothing the novitiate in a man's attire.<sup>3</sup>

Bearing in mind the great secrecy which the natives have everywhere maintained in regard to their initiation ceremonies

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<sup>1</sup> *Aborigines of Victoria*, vol. I, pp. 60, 61.

<sup>2</sup> *Journ. Anthropol. Inst.*, vol. XIV, pp. 322, 323.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. XIV, p. 323.

and the consequent difficulty of obtaining any information on the subject, we may safely assume that the reports given by Mr Smyth in 1878 and subsequently by Mr Howitt are mere fragments of a fuller ceremonial, picked up from men who either knew no more or would not tell it if they did.

The types of ceremonies just referred to may, in their complete state, have been merely preliminary forms of inauguration leading up to the final ceremony of the Burbung, or they may have comprised all that was compulsory for the youths to pass through. In investigating the rites of different tribes along the coast of New South Wales I found several abnormal and probationary forms of initiation ceremonies, among which may be mentioned the Murrawin, Dhalgai, Walloonggurra, Nguttan, and Kutja, which I have elsewhere described.<sup>1</sup>

## II—THE KURNAI NATION

That portion of Victoria lying between the eastern limit of the Bangarang nation and the boundary between New South Wales and Victoria, and extending from the seacoast northerly to the Australian Alps or somewhat farther, was inhabited by a few small tribes known collectively as the Kurnai. For the boundaries of these tribes I am indebted to Mr R. B. Smyth's valuable work on the "Aborigines of Victoria," which I have modified toward the northeast.

These people, according to Mr Howitt, do not appear to have had any fully developed totemic intermarrying groups similar to those which I have described as obtaining among the Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi, but were divided into local clans who furnished each other with wives, care being taken to prevent the union of persons too nearly related to one another. Mr J. Bulmer, who has been many years superintendent of the aboriginal station at Lake Tyers, in the heart of the Kurnai country, thinks that they formerly had class names in connection with their marriage system, but that these fell into disuse when the natives mixed with the white people who took possession of the country.<sup>2</sup>

The initiation ceremonies of the Kurnai, known as the Jeraeil,

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<sup>1</sup> *Journ. Anthropol. Inst.*, vol. xxvi, pp. 338-340; *Proc. Amer. Philos. Soc. Philadelphia*, vol. xxxvii, No. 157.

<sup>2</sup> *The Australian Race*, vol. iii, p. 546.

were described by Mr Howitt in 1885.<sup>1</sup> I subsequently obtained sketches of the locality in which the rites took place, together with some further particulars asked for from that gentleman, from which I was enabled to prepare a plan of the Jeraeil ground, accompanied by explanatory letter-press.<sup>2</sup>

### III—THE BOOANDIK NATION

The geographic limits of this aggregate of tribes were the sea-coast from Lacepede bay, in South Australia, to Geelong, in Victoria, and are represented on the map as No. 3. On the west they were bounded by the Narrinyeri nation, No. 4 on the map, and on the east by the Bangarang, No. 2. The last-named boundary, which extends from the vicinity of Geelong almost to the Murray, I have adopted from Mr E. M. Curr's valuable work, "The Australian Race," which is accompanied by a map of Australia. I have also been guided by Mr J. Dawson's book, in which he mentions the Leigh river<sup>3</sup> (see my map) as the eastern limit of the tribes constituting this nation.

Between the northern boundary of the Booandik people, which has been determined by my own inquiries, and the Murray river there is a strip of country which was occupied by some tribes bearing the group names Muckwarra and Keelparra, who formed the southern outposts of the Barkunjee nation, extending a long way into New South Wales (see map). The social organization, initiation ceremonies, and boundaries of the Barkunjee people have been described by me elsewhere.

In 1872 the Rev. L. Fison, from information received from Mr D. Stewart, reported the existence of two divisions among the Mount Gambier blacks. The class names were Kumite and Krokee for males—Kumite-gor and Krokee-gor for females. Kumite must always marry Krokee-gor, and Krokee, Kumite-gor.<sup>4</sup> Mr Fison did not then state the division to which the children belonged, but he supplied this at a later period.<sup>5</sup>

In 1880 Mrs James Smith, assisted by her son, Mr D. Stewart (the same gentleman who had supplied the information to Mr

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<sup>1</sup> *Journ. Anthropol. Inst.*, vol. xiv, pp. 301-325.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. xxv, pp. 317, 318, plate xxvii, section iii.

<sup>3</sup> *Australian Aborigines of Western Districts of Victoria*, p. 27.

<sup>4</sup> *Trans. Roy. Soc. Victoria*, vol. x, p. 161.

<sup>5</sup> *Kamilaroi and Kurnai* (1880), p. 34.



Fison), published a book under the auspices of the government, giving the divisions and totems of the Booandik tribe at Mount Gambier, who formerly occupied that portion of South Australia lying between the mouth of the Glenelg river and Rivoli bay. There were four other tribes who inhabited the country from Rivoli to Lacepede bays and northeasterly to Border Town. These five tribes, of which the Booandik was the largest, all spoke dialects of the same language. Each tribe was divided into two distinct classes, Kumite and Kroké, the feminines of these names being Kumite gor and Kroké-gor respectively. If a man were Kumite, his wife must be Kroké-gor, and if a man were Kroké, his wife must be Kumite-gor, and the children belonged to their mother's class.<sup>1</sup>

Mrs Smith states that the totems attached to the Kumite division were fish-hawk, pelican, crow, black cockatoo, snake, smoke, honeysuckle, blackwood, fire, frost, dog, rain, thunder, lightning, stars, moon, fish, stringy bark, seal, eel, etc. The Kroké totems were owl, tea-tree, yam, white crestless cockatoo, duck, wallaby, opossum, crayfish, turkey, quail, poolatch, kangaroo, she-oak, summer, sun, etc.

In 1881 Mr James Dawson published a valuable book<sup>2</sup> describing the customs of the aborigines inhabiting the western districts of Victoria, from the Glenelg river to the Leigh, one of the rivers emptying into Port Phillip bay, near Geelong (see map), and from the seacoast northerly to the main dividing range. He states that all these tribes were divided into Kurokeetch and Kuanamit, being merely a slight difference of spelling to the names recorded by Mrs Smith. He says that among the tribes throughout this area the descent of the children was reckoned through the mother.

Mr E. M. Curr reported in 1886<sup>3</sup> that there were certain totems of the Kumite group which had others related or "belonging" to them. For example, to the crow belonged rain, thunder, lightning, etc. In a similar manner the fish-hawk, pelican, black cockatoo, and non-venomous snakes had other totems belonging to them. In the Kroké group the turkey had the

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<sup>1</sup> The Booandik Tribe of South Australian Aborigines (1880), pp. 3, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Aborigines of Western Districts of Victoria, pp. 26, 27.

<sup>3</sup> The Australian Race, vol. III, p. 462.

small kangaroo, quail, yams, etc., connected with it, and so on for the others. This division or arrangement of the totems referred to the food to be eaten by each division. Mr Curr states that he obtained this information from Mr D. Stewart, already mentioned in this article.

In 1887 Mr J. Bulmer stated that the Wimmera tribes were divided into two groups, called Grokitch and Gamatch, with the feminine equivalents Grokigurk and Gamatgurk. A Gamatch married a Grokigurk.<sup>1</sup> These names are manifestly merely dialectic variations of those given by Mrs Smith.

At Swan Hill, on the Murray, I met some natives of the Avoca river, who were on a visit to the former place, who stated that in their country on the Avoca and neighboring rivers the group names were Krokitch and Kamatch, with the corresponding female names Krokitchgurk and Kamatchgurk, with rules of marriage and descent as exemplified in the subjoined table, the children of both sexes taking the name of their mother's group.

Husband.	Wife.	Sons.	Daughters.
Krokitch.....	Kamatchgurk...	Kamatch.....	Kamatchgurk.
Kamatch.....	Krokitchgurk...	Krokitch.....	Krokitchgurk.

Barkunjee black fellows at Balranald have told me that their group name Muckwarra corresponds to Kamatch, and Keelparra to Krokitch, of the Wimmera and Avoca tribes.

To the Rev. P. Bogisch, of the mission station on the Wimmera river, I am indebted for the accompanying list of totems. Among the totems of the Krokitch group are included the following:

Opossum	Emu	Laughing Jackass
Mallee Hen	Wallaby	Curlew
White Cockatoo	Muscle	Carpet Snake
Teal Duck	Sun	Plain Turkey
Native Cat	Smoker Parrot	Eaglehawk
Moon	Iguana	Turtle
Mopoke	Grub (edible)	Dickomi Snake

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. Roy. Geog. Soc. Aust., Victoria Branch*, vol. v, p. 39.

The undermentioned totems are enumerated as some of those attached to the Kamatch group :

Porcupine	Kangaroo	Black Duck
Whip-snake	Swan	Death Adder
Native Companion	Mountain Duck	Crow
Water	Native Dog	Kangaroo-rat
Black Cockatoo	Jew Lizard	Platypus
Blackfish	Wild Hop	Bunyip
Magpie	Native Bee	Pelican
Sleeping Lizard	White Ant	Honey
Wattle-bird	Honey-bird	Red Gum

Mrs Smith does not deal with the Booandik tribe farther eastward than the South Australian boundary, but, knowing how tribal limits are usually formed, I feel sure that they originally extended to the Glenelg river, or perhaps included the whole valley of that stream up as far as where it turns away to the eastward, and thence northerly to the Tatiara country, where they would adjoin the western outposts of the Wimmera tribes. From Border Town, which Mrs Smith gives as the northern limit of the Booandik organization, to the Wimmera river is only about fifty or sixty miles.

Mr Humphries, a Police Trooper at Border Town, reports that the Tatiara tribes, who spoke the Nalunghee language, were divided into six "clans;" that they married within their own tribe, but marriage between blood relations was prohibited. He also states that when the boys were initiated they were taken away from the women for a fortnight.<sup>1</sup> The Rev. George Taplin says the Narrinyeri "bore a special enmity to the Tatiara people."<sup>2</sup> For these and other reasons I am induced to include the Tatiara tribe in the Booandik nation.

Thanks to Mr E. M. Curr, who made some investigations when it was still practicable to obtain a good deal of information from the natives, it is possible for us to apply a philological test by which we find a great affinity of speech among all the people from the district around Swan Hill, on the Murray river, southerly to the seacoast and westerly to the other side of the South Australian boundary.<sup>3</sup> I have found that where there is a sim-

<sup>1</sup> Folklore, Manners, &c., South Australian Aborigines (1879), pp. 57-58.

<sup>2</sup> Native Tribes of South Australia (1879), p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> The Australian Race, vol. III, p. 499.

ilarity of speech among adjacent tribes their social organizations are also more or less in accord. They attend each others' ceremonial gatherings, they intermarry, and help one another against a common enemy.

I will now endeavor to state some conclusions in regard to the inaugural ceremonies common among these people. Mr R. B. Smyth states that Mr P. Beveridge told him that the Murray tribes below Swan Hill used to meet and mingle with those inhabiting the Avoca, Avon, and Wimmera rivers during the winter months in each year.<sup>1</sup> Some of these visits would no doubt be for the purpose of attending the initiatory rites. This would naturally lead to the natives of the Wimmera and adjacent rivers visiting the Murray tribes and participating in their Burbung ceremonies. It is a rule among all blacks that any one who takes part in their initiation ceremonies must do so either as a novice undergoing the ordeal or as one who has already passed through it. It is only among tribes whose ceremonies are similar that there is any reciprocity in this respect.

I have elsewhere given a very comprehensive description of the Burbung of the Wiradjuri tribes on the lower Murrumbidgee river<sup>2</sup> and thence southerly to the Murray. Some old natives whom I once met at Moulamein told me that they had attended the initiation ceremonies of the Wimmera and adjacent tribes, and that the procedure was similar in nearly all essential points to their own Burbung. From the heads of the Avoca and Wimmera rivers southerly to any part of the seacoast between Geelong and, say, Portland bay is not much over a hundred miles. Owing to a similarity of the languages and the identity of the divisional systems, it is not too much to expect that the people inhabiting the sources of the rivers referred to would meet and occasionally intermarry with the coast tribes, participating in their corrobories and intermingling with their customs to some extent, at any rate.

It is likely that the Burbung, in being transmitted from the Murray River district, via the Wimmera and Avoca, to the Glenelg, Hopkins, Leigh, and adjacent rivers, would undergo modifications. We have already seen, in dealing with the Bangarang nation, that, according to Mr R. B. Smyth, the Tib-but of

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<sup>1</sup> *Aborigines of Victoria*, vol. 1, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> *Journ. Roy. Soc. N. S. Wales*, vol. xxxi, pp. 111-153.

the coast differed from the Narramang of the Goulburn and Yarra tribes farther inland. Rites analogous to the Tib-but may have extended from Port Phillip along the coast of the western district for some distance. Mr James Dawson<sup>1</sup> states that the hairs of the novices' beards were pulled out, and they were made to drink water mixed with mud. He says a front tooth was not extracted, but that the novices were subjected to rigorous treatment. Unfortunately, Mr Dawson does not seem to have known much about the secret ceremonies; hence his allusion to them is very elementary.

In dealing with the Narrinyeri nation in subsequent pages it will be seen that they plucked the hair from different parts of the bodies of the novices undergoing initiation, and I have no doubt it was from them that the Booandik people copied the pulling out of the beard referred to by Mr Dawson, and probably also the omission of the custom of extracting a tooth on such occasions. I was informed by old natives of Moulamein and Swan hill that the Lodden, Avoca, and lower Wimmera blacks knocked out a front tooth in the manner described in my account of the Burbung of the Wiradjuri tribes on the Murrumbidgee river.<sup>2</sup> In my investigations respecting the initiatory rites of a considerable number of tribes in New South Wales and Queensland I have observed that where two communities adjoin there will be a modification of the ceremonies to meet the views of both parties.

#### IV—THE NARRINYERI NATION

Adjoining the Booandik organization on the northwest and north is an aggregate of tribes which I propose calling the Narrinyeri nation, because the tribe bearing that name is more widely known than any of its neighbors. This nation comprises several tribes, among which may be mentioned the Narrinyeri, Moorundie, Narwijerook, Arkatko, and Marowera. In determining the boundaries of the tract of country which they occupied I am largely indebted to a valuable book on the "Folklore, Manners, Customs, and Languages of the Aborigines of South Australia," edited by the Rev. George Taplin, and published at Adelaide, in 1879, by the South Australian Government. I am also under

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Aborigines of Western Districts of Victoria (1881), p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> *Journ. Roy. Soc. N. S. Wales*, vol. xxxi, pp. 111-153.

obligations to the works of Mr E. J. Eyre for early information respecting the language and customs of these natives. By means of the books referred to and some comprehensive inquiries which I have made myself, I have been enabled to collect several particulars of the social organization and inaugural ceremonies of the communities under consideration.

In studying the vocabularies given by Mr Taplin and Mr Curr respecting the native tribes about Lake Alexandrina and up the Murray river to the junction therewith of the Darling, we observe that there is a great similarity in their dialects, showing that they are branches from the same stock. Mr E. J. Eyre, who had excellent opportunities of studying the language of these people in the early days, said there was but little difference in the dialects of the tribes up the course of the Murray from Lake Alexandrina to the Darling.<sup>1</sup> Again, in examining such fragments of the initiation ceremonies as have been preserved, it is found that they also resemble each other. For instance, a prominent feature in them all is the plucking out of the hair from different parts of the bodies of those youths who are to be inaugurated into the status of manhood.

The Rev. George Taplin says the Narrinyeri tribes inhabited the coastal district from Lacepede Bay to Cape Jervis, and up both sides of the Murray river for about twenty miles above Wellington, and had for their neighbors the Moorundie blacks.<sup>2</sup>

Mr Ewens, a mounted trooper, residing at Blanchetown, reported that the Moorundie tribe was located on each side of the Murray, and for some distance back from it, from Mannum to Overland Corner.<sup>3</sup> Mr E. J. Eyre states that the Narwijjerook tribe occupied the country around Lake Bonney, which is not far from Overland Corner, and that they attended the initiation ceremonies of the Moorundie people.<sup>4</sup>

At Chowilla, on the Murray, a few miles from the boundary line between South Australia and New South Wales, as reported by Mr Shaw, the hair was plucked from the privates of the novices.<sup>5</sup> The Rev. R. W. Holden mentions a tribe called Marowera, at the

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<sup>1</sup> Journs. Expeds. Discovery Central Australia, vol. II, p. 331.

<sup>2</sup> Folklore, Manners, &c., S. A. Aborigines, p. 34. Native Tribes of South Australia p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Folklore, Manners, &c., S. A. Aborigines, p. 30.

<sup>4</sup> Journs. Expeds. Dis. Cent. Australia (1845), vol. II, p. 219.

<sup>5</sup> Folklore, Manners, &c., S. A. Aborigines, p. 28.

junction of the Darling and Murray rivers, where "every particle of hair was pulled out from every part excepting the head, the secret parts suffering the most." Then the body from head to foot was smeared over with fat and ochre.<sup>1</sup> Mr E. J. Eyre says the Arkatko tribe, who inhabited the scrub country to the east of the Murray, had a similar dialect to the natives of that stream, and that they met each other.<sup>2</sup>

All the early writers, with the exception of the Rev. R. W. Holden, who have dealt with the tribes which I have included in the Narrinyeri nation, and also about Gambierton and the Tatiara country, have said that the custom of extracting a front tooth was not in force among them. Mr Holden's statement is to the following effect: "At the Darling junction they do not knock out a tooth, but on the lower Murray they do."<sup>3</sup> He repeats the statement in two places.

The following is a valuable and interesting account of the *Wharepin* inaugural ceremony of the Moorundie and Narwijjerook tribes, which took place near Moorundie, on the Murray river, and was described by Mr E. J. Eyre in 1845.<sup>4</sup>

When it was determined to inaugurate such of the youths as were old enough to be admitted to the rank of men,<sup>5</sup> some young fellows were sent as messengers to invite the neighboring tribes. These messengers carried long narrow nets made of string and manufactured from rushes. The nets were left with the tribes to whom the invitations were sent, and were brought back by them when they responded to it.

When one of these tribes neared the appointed place of meeting the men of the tribe who had sent out the invitation sat down in a row to receive them. The novices, painted with red ochre and grease, sat behind the men, and the women sat behind the novices. The new mob now approached—the men painted and carrying their weapons, the women and children being in

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Jours. Expeds. Dis. Cent. Australia (1845), vol. II, p. 331.

<sup>3</sup> Folklore, Manners, &c., pp. 19 and 27.

<sup>4</sup> Jours. Expeds. Discovery Central Australia (1845), vol. II, pp. 219-222 and 336-338.

<sup>5</sup> Rev. G. Taplin says the boys were not allowed to cut or comb their hair from the time they were about ten years of age until they were ready to undergo the initiatory rites, which took place when their beards had grown a sufficient length.—Native Tribes of S. A., pp. 15, 16. Rev. R. W. Holden states that the lads were generally initiated into a state of manhood soon after the hair began to grow well about the chin—Folklore Manners, &c., S. A. Aborigines, p. 27.

the rear, separate from the men, and a little on one side.<sup>1</sup> The strangers halted, and some of their women singled out in front of the rest and stood between the two tribes. These women then threw down their cloaks and bags and raised a loud wail, accompanied by frantic gesticulations, lacerating their bodies with sharp shells till the blood flowed from the wounds. After some time had been spent in this way the women took up their bundles again and returned to the rear of their own party.

An elderly man of the Narwijjerook people now advanced and held a short colloquy with the local mob. He then stepped back and brought his own men forward, exhibiting in front three uplifted spears, to which were attached the little nets left with them by the envoys already referred to, and which were the emblems of the duty they had to perform. The men of the Moorundie tribe now rose to their feet with a suppressed shout. The new arrivals then speared fifteen or sixteen of the local men in the left arm a little below the shoulder, the latter holding out their arms for the purpose of receiving the wounds. The Narwijjerooks then withdrew about a hundred yards and camped.

As the invited tribes would probably reach their destination at different times, it is likely that each mob would be received in the same manner. It is also probable that the assembled people, while waiting for the arrival of further contingents, would have some preliminary ceremonies in the meantime, analogous to those described by me as obtaining among other tribes, but on these points Mr Eyre gives no information.

When all the tribes had arrived the date was fixed for carrying out the ceremonies. Early in the morning of the appointed day the novices were mustered out of the camp and ran away a short distance, where they were captured and thrown down.<sup>2</sup> They were next raised up and surrounded by several natives, who held them while they were painted from head to foot with red ochre and grease. The mothers and other relatives then surrounded the group of men, crying and lamenting and lacer-

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<sup>1</sup> This very closely resembles the way in which a new contingent of the Wiradjuri arrived at the main encampment.—*Journ. Roy. Soc. N. S. Wales*, vol. xxxi, pp. 121, 122.

<sup>2</sup> In the initiation ceremony of the Narrinyeri tribe, which they called *narumbe*, Mr Taplin says the novices were seized by the men at night suddenly and carried to a spot a little distance from the camp, the women resisting by throwing firesticks at the men. In another place he says it was the men who threw the firesticks, by which means the women were supposed to be beaten off.—*Folklore, Manners, &c.*, p. 41; *Native Tribes of S. Australia*, p. 17



ating their bodies with sharp shells or flints. When the painting of the novices was completed they were led away by their guardians to a little distance and placed, sitting down, on green bushes brought for the purpose. If they were permitted to move from where they were sitting, they had to hold a bunch of green boughs in each hand.

Close to this place the three spears, with the nets attached, already mentioned, were stuck in a row in the ground.<sup>1</sup> Three men then went and seated themselves at the foot of the three spears, with their legs crossed.<sup>2</sup> Two men proceeded to where the novices were and, seizing each in succession by the legs and shoulders, carefully lifted them from the ground and carried them and laid them on their backs at full length on green boughs spread upon the ground in front of the three men sitting by the spears, so that the head of each novice rested on the lap of one of the three men.<sup>3</sup> The novices kept their eyes closed all this while and pretended to be in a trance.

A cloak was then thrown over each novice and a man, selected from a distant tribe, came quietly up and sat down beside him, and, lifting up the cloak, commenced plucking the hair from the *pubes*.<sup>4</sup> At intervals the operators were relieved by others of both sexes. When all the hair had been pulled out, that of each novice was carefully rolled up in green boughs, all the lots being put together and given to one of the old men to take care of. Bunches of green boughs were now placed under the arms<sup>5</sup> and in the hands of each novice, after which several natives took hold of them, raising them suddenly and simultaneously

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<sup>1</sup> Mr G. F. Angas says the tops of the spears were inclined toward each other and were ornamented with bunches of feathers.—Savage Life in Australia and New Zealand (1847), vol. i, p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> There were three novitiates on the occasion described by Mr Eyre. If there had been more boys it is likely there would have been a spear with a man sitting by it for each novice.

<sup>3</sup> Mr Meyer, in speaking of the Encounter Bay tribe, says two fires were lit at the place the novices were carried to and the lads placed between them.—Native Tribes of S. Australia, p. 188.

<sup>4</sup> Mr Eyre states that at Encounter bay, instead of pulling out the hair of the *pubes*, the incipient beard was pulled out by the roots.—Journs. Expeds. Discovery in Central Australia (1845), vol. ii, p. 340. At Goolwa, Encounter bay, Mr Moriarty says the ceremony was there called *tchein*, and the mustache and beard were plucked out.—Folklore, Manners, &c., of Aborigines of S. A., p. 53. Mr Meyer states that all the hair was pulled out except that of the head and beard.—Native Tribes of South Australia, p. 188.

<sup>5</sup> Mr G. F. Angas says green gum bushes were placed under the armpits and over the *os pubis* of the boys.—Savage Life in Aust. and N. Z., p. 98.

to their feet, while a loud, guttural "whaugh!" was uttered by the other natives standing around. The heads and bodies of the novices were then rubbed over with grease and red ochre, and tufts of feathers and kangaroo teeth were worn tied to the hair in front.

The Rev. George Taplin says that in the Narrinyeri tribe when the hair had grown again about two inches it was plucked out the second time, and after it had again grown about the same length the operation was repeated for the third time, the whole period being about one or two years. During the continuance of the *Narumbe* ceremonies the novices were forbidden to eat some twenty different kinds of food, which was particularized to them by the old men.<sup>1</sup>

We have just seen that among the tribes inhabiting the sea-coast east and west of Lake Alexandrina and thence up both sides of the Murray to the junction of the Darling there is a close connection of tongues and a similarity in their initiation ceremonies. The Rev. George Taplin and some of the other writers quoted say that descent was through the father. At the eleventh hour of nowadays it would be difficult and perhaps unsafe to attempt to controvert these statements. We should, however, remember that what I have called the Narrinyeri nation, No. 4 on the map hereto appended, was adjoined on at least two sides—the east and the north—by tribes among whom descent was invariably counted through the mother.

Mr McEntire says that among the natives of Yorke peninsula the children followed the father;<sup>2</sup> but I find that in the neighborhood of Crystal Brook (see map), which is only about a hundred miles northerly from Adelaide, the people had the same two divisional names prevalent at Port Lincoln, where the children always belonged to their mother's division.<sup>3</sup>

It appears, then, that there is conclusive evidence that east of the Narrinyeri nation, at Lake Hindonmarsh and Gambierton, there were two divisions—Krokitch and Kamatch—with matriarchal descent. To the north, about Wentworth and Euston, we find the names Muckwarra and Keelparra, in which descent

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<sup>1</sup> Folklore, Manners, &c., of S. A. Aborigines, pp 40-42.

<sup>2</sup> Folklore, Manners, &c., of Aborigines of S. Australia, p. 63.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. C. W. Schürmann: "Aboriginal Tribes of Port Lincoln, S. Australia," 1840. Mr Schürmann was the first to call attention to Australian divisions. He was followed by Sir George Grey in 1841.

is again uterine.<sup>1</sup> At Crystal Brook, some seventy miles from the western boundary of the Narrinyeri nation, the names Mat-tiri and Karraru, or dialectic variations of them, have been observed, with descent also through the mother.<sup>2</sup>

Although Mr Taplin says that in the tribes about Lake Alexandrina the children followed the clan and totem of the father,<sup>3</sup> yet from my experience among the blacks in all the colonies I know how easily a mistake might be made in regard to these matters, especially as the mother goes to reside in the subtribe (or clan) of her husband and the children are brought up there. At the time Mr Taplin collected the information contained in his "Folklore, &c.," very little was known of the social structure of Australian communities. In several instances in Queensland and South Australia, where previous writers had reported that the children followed the father, I have ascertained that descent was determined by the division to which the mother belonged.

A curved line from a point at A, about midway between Cape Jervis and the city of Adelaide, and extending in a generally northeasterly direction toward B (see map), shows the western boundary of the Narrinyeri nation, and at the same time defines the eastern limits of those tribes who practiced circumcision. As this is a very important boundary, it may be as well to state my authorities for fixing it in this position.

In Mr E. G. Eyre's work, published in 1845, he says: "Descending the east side of Spencer's and St. Vincent's gulf, and around the district of Adelaide, the rite of circumcision is retained. Proceeding but a little farther, to the banks of the Murray and its neighborhood, no such ceremony exists."<sup>4</sup> According to Mr McEntire, the blacks who inhabited Yorke peninsula had a language different to that of the Murray tribes, and the boys were circumcised.<sup>5</sup> Mr. Curr says the language of the Yorke Peninsula tribe was similar to that spoken by the Adelaide blacks, and that at the ceremony of circumcision the foreskin was swallowed by the father of the novice.<sup>6</sup> Mr T. M. Sutton also states

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<sup>1</sup> The Booandik Tribe of S. A. Aborigines (1880), pp. 3-4.

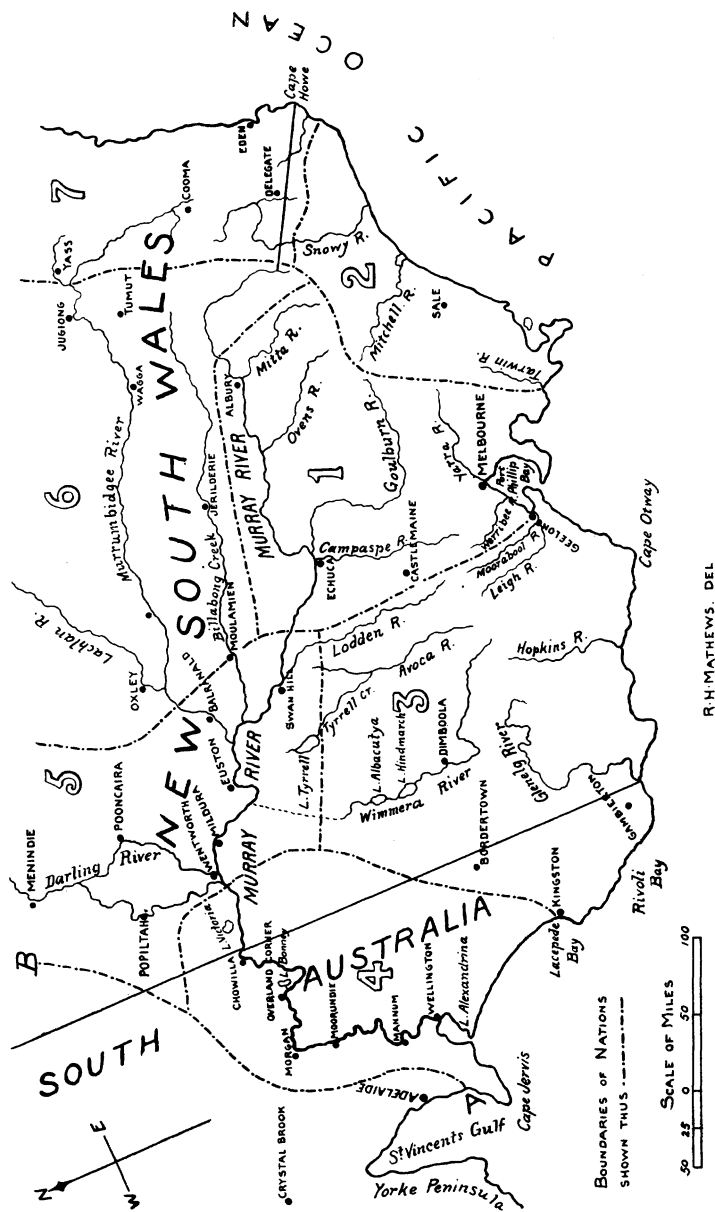
<sup>2</sup> Folklore, Manners, &c., S. A. Aborigines, p. 64.

<sup>3</sup> I find that Mr Taplin says that in the Marowera tribe, at the junction of the Darling, the children belonged to the father's tribe, although it is now well established that they follow the mother's division.—Folklore, &c., p. 168.

<sup>4</sup> Journs. Expeds. Discov. Cent. Australia, vol. II, pp. 332, 333, and 407.

<sup>5</sup> Folklore, Manners, &c., S. A. Aborigines, p. 63.

<sup>6</sup> The Australian Race, vol. II, p. 144.



R. H. MATHEWS. DEL.

MAP SHOWING DISTRIBUTION OF THE TRIBES OF VICTORIA

that circumcision was prevalent on this peninsula, and mentions the use of a humming instrument or bullroarer at their secret ceremonies.<sup>1</sup> Mr Wm. Wyatt says the dialect of the Adelaide tribe was distinct from that of the Encounter Bay blacks. He also states that circumcision was practiced by the former.<sup>2</sup>

#### EXPLANATION OF MAP

No. 1 represents the boundaries of the Bangarang nation, an aggregate of tribes who occupied central Victoria. Although they adjoined the Wiradjuri people beyond the Murray, there was a strip of country south of that river, from above Albury to a point between Echuca and Swan Hill, in which the Wiradjuri inaugural customs were largely intermixed with those of the Bangarang. This refers to the tribes who inhabited the lower portions of the Campaspe, Goulburn, Ovens, and Mitta Mitta rivers.

No. 2. The small nation of the Kurmai was located in eastern Victoria, from about the Tarwin river almost to the New South Wales boundary.

No. 3. The Booandik nation occupied the western district of Victoria and a small portion of South Australia. There is a strip of Victorian territory lying between their northern boundary and the Murray river, which is occupied by several small tribes belonging to the Barkunjee organization. The initiation ceremonies of the Barkunjee strongly tinged those of the Booandik nation for some distance up the Avoca and Wimmera rivers. Traces of the Wiradjuri ceremonies were distinguishable on the Lower Lodden.

No. 4 represents the approximate boundaries of the Narrinyeri nation, whose territory is situated chiefly in South Australia, with small portions in Victoria and New South Wales. The line from A to B on the map, part of which forms their western boundary, determines the eastern limits of the country within which the custom of circumcision is in force. This boundary is of a great importance, because it segregates the tribes who practice circumcision from those who do not.

Nos. 5, 6, and 7 show the adjoining nations of the Barkunjee, Wiradjuri, and Thurrawal respectively, whose divisional systems, inaugural ceremonies, and other customs have been described by me in various scientific journals and other publications.

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<sup>1</sup> *Proc. Roy. Geog. Soc. Aust. (S. A.)*, vol. 11, 3d session, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> *Native Tribes of South Australia*, p. 160-164.